

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Order of St James (UK) Newsletter</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">April 2022</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><a href="http://www.orderofstjames.info">www.orderofstjames.info</a></p>	
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**Jeremiah, Jesus and the holiest place in your spiritual lives.** Fr. Ed Elsey, OSJ

The holiest place in your life is the theme of this meditation together.

My late father was horrified as a 'black-fronted' evangelical, at the 'monstrosities' as he called them, of the Roman Catholic Church with their elaborate Mass celebrations, elevation of the host in the monstrance, which gave him his 'montrosity' allegations, and I can see him now, black bible in hand, leaning over the front gate of our home in Debden, Essex as the Marian procession trawled by, ranting and railing, to our embarrassment, watching as small children from the front room bay window, yelling verses traditionally yelled by evangelicals at Walsingham, Norfolk, 'Our Lady' is trestled aloft by self-appointed pilgrims.

As I grew into the faith, I began to wonder why denominations differed so much in their worship of Our Father, God, and why such resentment - hatred even - existed between them, to the dishonour of those neighbours, without faith, watching from the sidelines.

My theological studies for the sixty years since those innocent days, has taught me that more points of agreement exist amid the controversies of our denominational allegiances.

So I knew discussion of altars would be controversial and might have me drummed out of Colwyn Bay, though hopefully not burned at the stake for my sharing.

So to the holiest place in your Christian life, worship, meditation and conviction of faith. Consider, if you will, with me what attempts you have made to find the sacred, reserved, quiet space our Lord told us to seek when we pray to the Father. A space in your daily routine, as faithful Muslims seek to so, and frequency of coming here to worship together as we are doing this morning and encourage others to join you, for their solace, comfort, strength and witness.

Our Lord instructed us, when we pray, to find a reserved space, quiet, uninterrupted, sole and solaced. That is not always possible unless, like me, you are fortunate enough to have a space, an oratory, a place of quiet prayer and votive to the God we worship. But here this morning, identifying with fellow Christians in this place and worldwide also worshipping, we have a joined identity and purpose which is HOLY. Be ye holy as the Lord your God is holy.

Times have changed since the imprisoned, enslaved Hebrews were given God-led escape from Egypt and humiliation, restored to supremacy by the One they believed had their interests, and their interests alone, at heart. Slaughter of innocents began as they took back the land they believed God had given them, alone. Warrior leaders, as well as lawyers [no comment] led them into reclaim.

But underpinning all of this, commandments were given them to 'keep them' on a straight and narrow course of personal discipline and collective responsibility and the altar was the respected, honoured, sacred site where they believed God touched them personally, related to them as an emerging nation and 'came down' to give a presence, terrifying, deadly, feared and even faked [golden calf stuff] to ensure they knew who was boss.

Jeremiah presages a warning of what this has brought them to, and what is surely to come.

Even taking the name of God in vain would mean instant striking down in front of the people of anyone found guilty. Touching the altar was an immediate 'zap'.

Compare with today's seeming casual approach to God and to traditional respectful language. The 'oh my Gahd' remarks of teenagers, especially, blasphemy abounding, swearing being alleged helpful as release from stress, and two generations of departure from the faith - or any faith at all, for that matter, resulting in no condemnation, no sudden death, no stoning, no zapping, no elimination from the tribe, no 'actual' evidential presence of God's wrath and anger in everyday life and no evacuation from faith communities for misdemeanor or disobedience as judgment of weak morality, excesses of carnal license, nor abandonment of family life, proper parenting or moral compromise. Wrong often seems to flourish unchallenged and uncriticised.

We've never had it so good. Persecution, as promised, seems a long way away. In God's grace may that continue.

Are we prepared for what might be ahead? If you were on trial for your faith, would there be enough evidence to convict you. We have seen the fundamentalism of ISIS.

So where are our sacred spaces?

Where the altars upon which God's presence amongst us, is evidenced?

Fake altars abound in our society - think about that - but they do not focus on the Cross nor the Blood of Christ. They are fantasy, pagan ritual and humanoid.

Well here it is. The table, the Mensa, upon which we place the divine objects of our redemption. The bread and body the blood and the cup commemorating the sacrifice of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that we might have life and have it more abundantly. You will not die by touching it, but live by feeding from it. Your respect is requested, however. It is only a table, only originally a stone, but made sacred by the intention of its use and function.

Romans had active and established faith routines. They would not consider leaving the house without tokens or votives for whichever God took care of the current activity. A god for each purpose. Hence Paul's introduction to them of the Unknown God. ARA was their Altar; LEX, their law and FOCUS their hearth and home.

Seems they had everything covered!!

The ancient Altar of sacrifice and the Altar of Incense are combined into one, for us. No animals screaming as they die, no fluttering pigeons frantic at their forthcoming neck-wringing, no money changers to convert your collection into temple tokens at exorbitant rates of exchange, no human interpretation of what you should or must be seeing, involving, interpreting or committing. Just you and Christ's elements. You and your Master. You and your God. Your thoughts, surrounded by 'beautiful words' formed by your denomination to help you understand what is happening, and your enrichment by His strength and infusion.

Rituals which separated denominations or political allegiance have largely disappeared but we need to guard our words and our prejudices to avoid going back to the 'bad old days'.

G K Chesterton [author of Fr Brown and that lovely Palm Sunday poem 'The Donkey'] cleverly describes our fallen society in the hymn we just sang: O God of earth and altar - what current abuse, terror, inequality, injustice and fear, reigns in our troubled world.

This weekend commemorates the Peterloo massacre in Manchester, where local magistrates, several of them clergymen, who failed to notice social change that was taking place under their very noses, gave orders to fire upon the crowd and survivors faced horrendous prison sentences, their families broken and destroyed. The old wrath of God as they saw it, perpetuated upon ignorant and innocent protestors, frustrated that nobody in authority seemed to be heeding their poverty, distress and abandonment. Watch Hong Kong.

So in any of our boasted and treasured rituals of faith, let us never forget the lives and struggles of ordinary people alongside us, for whom we should be speaking up. Remember that as you take these elements of bread and cup this morning, you do so alongside countless thousands worldwide, many of whom will be taking their last communion before persecution, death, martyrdom, imprisonment for their faith, this coming week or in the coming days and similar broken up families and security they have spent years building up.

For a travelling potential nation, preservation of the 'holy site' was important. Not for us.

Nowadays the priesthood of all believers means you, as with the Jewish families of old and today, can celebrate your Passover in your own home, in quiet, familiarity and family unity. But we choose to meet together and, not with over-familiarity or over-regularity, choose to make our communion together, the words commune and community featuring strongly. We are united, in Him, with Him, through Him.

Jesus was also in continuity with the Old Testament prophetic critique of the cult. For example, in the Sermon on the Mount He suggested that the relationship with one's brother needed to be resolved before presenting offerings in the temple ( Matt 5:23-24 ). He also expressed frustration with loopholes in the priestly system, whereby one could violate selected Old Testament laws (e.g., the requirement to honor one's parents by taking care of them) by substituting cultic piety of making offerings to the Lord ( Matt 15:5 ; Mark 7:11, ; the well-known "corban" passage ) and all would be 'okay with God'. Not so, my friends.

Another dimension is his own personal identification with two aspects of the system: as our High Priest and as the sacrificial victim offered to God on the altar. It is important to remember that the New Testament offers a metaphorical application of the categories of the Old Testament system of offerings and sacrifices to Jesus in order to explain and illustrate the various ways in which his death on the cross was beneficial to us. Jesus was not literally slaughtered at the burnt offering altar, his blood was not applied there, and his body was not burned there. Nevertheless, the different kinds of offerings and sacrifices serve as metaphors to illustrate the Divine purposes and complete efficacy of Jesus' death on the Cross, whereby our Redemption was secured.

Secondly, Jesus as our suffering servant "guilt offering." When John the Baptist said "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" ( John 1:29 ), the suffering servant of the Lord mentioned in Isaiah 53:7b, "he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth."

Thirdly, Jesus as our new covenant ratification "peace offering." According to Lk 22:1-23, the "last supper" of Jesus was a Passover meal. Toward the end of that meal Jesus created a new ritual on the foundation of the Passover ritual. The new ritual is the basis of the ordinance that we have now come to call "Communion, The "Eucharist", the Mass, the "Last Supper, " or the "Lord's Supper." As is well known it includes Jesus words [Lk 22] over the bread and the cup.

Both elements were part of the underlying Passover ritual, but Jesus referred to the bread as his own "body" and the cup as his own "blood."

Jewish authorities couldn't understand this. Persecution followed, especially by 'that man Saul' for converted religious Jewish members.

He referred to the cup as "the new covenant in my blood." The similarity to Moses' statement right back in Exodus 24:8 that "this is the blood of the covenant" makes it inconceivable that the apostles would have failed to connect Jesus' words with the covenant ratification ritual. In this case, however, the blood was for the ratification of the new covenant, which of course recalls Jeremiah.

The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, which I know very well, having conducted 21 tours there with adult and students over 40 years, and for my own spiritual encouragement and investigation, had severe and precise measurements for their altars and restrictions of access.

We have no such artificial reservations.

Their Herodian altar was built as a perfect square, reaching a height of 10 cubits (5 meters) and 32 cubits wide (16 meters) built in two main parts: the altar itself, and the ascent ramp, both made of stones and earth. Atop the altar, at its four corners, were hollow boxes making small 'horn-like' protrusions measuring 1 cubit square and 5 handbreadths high, the altar remaining in its place until the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE. The rock regarded as the Foundation stone of the Great Altar remains.



The mystique they built up around this simple object - an altar which became more and more elaborate until it was obscene - was necessary to ensure proper respect of God.

Our God is not as great, or as small, for us necessarily to do all that. They were a simple people, advised by their theology from traditional genetically inherited experts.

We are assured of our faith - One in Christ Jesus, or the opportunity to become so as never before in a tolerant society we are developing, and know more, both culturally and denominationally about what our God means in our lives. But beware.

God is sacred and we do well to regard Him with Honour due unto His Name, and the respect accorded to His Almighty status and power.

Our heart is our altar, the 'Holy Table' the reserved space, our spiritual concentration and devotion, the presence of Our Lord in our lives. With millions throughout the world, we DO THIS, the Mass, the Eucharist, the Holy Communion, 'IN REMEMBRANCE'.

We do it gladly, willingly, and are strengthened, fed, enlightened, enthused, encouraged by Him as we seek to follow in His footsteps his path, for the love of others, for their salvation and for ours.

## **Matthew 13 v 44-45: The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl**

***<sup>44</sup> "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field."***

***<sup>45</sup> "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. <sup>46</sup> When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it."***

I find myself being amused at these two short parables in that whilst they have potentially deep spiritual significance, they can not only be easily taken at face value but also 'out of context' and that will get us into all kinds of difficulty.

I believe and understand that the intended interpretation of both parables is on the lines of 'the kingdom of heaven is a great treasure and should be sought without thought of cost or effort'.

However, regarding the first parable of the pair.....

***<sup>44</sup> "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field."***

What on earth was this man doing rummaging around in someone else's field, possibly trampling over crops, and why was he being so morally dishonest in withholding the truth about what he had found from the owner?

And on discovering the treasure, wasn't he was duty bound to share that information, or am I thinking of today's laws rather than those applied at the time?

I find myself recalling all the troubles metal detectorists can get themselves into these days and the frequent court cases that erupt when discovered items are not declared and ownership rights are contested.

I'm also intrigued with the huge element of risk. What would have happened if he sold everything he had and the field was sold meanwhile to someone else?

What if it had been a subtle 'sugar trap' used by a devious land owner to get rid of a worthless and unproductive plot, the treasure magically disappearing at the point of sale leaving the buyer unable to say anything? How could they admit to knowing the hidden treasure was there in the first place?

What if the owner of the field became so suspicious over the overly eager purchase he double checked his property and discovered 'the hidden treasure' for himself, removed it and sold the field without – then what?

I suspect too that once the field had been sold and the treasure recovered by the buyer, the original owner would feel very miffed at having been 'cheated'. Only the field had been sold, not the supposedly 'hidden treasure'.

It all seems a bit unfair, deceitful and morally suspect, even un-Christian, but all too human. Maybe that is the all too recognisable appeal of this parable for the listener.

The point remains though that whatever the possible outcomes, 'the hidden treasure', was obviously worth the effort, risk and expense to the purchaser.

It's so easy to read too much into the few textual details. The point is that parables contain only the information needed to present their message.

It may be interesting and entertaining to explore the edges and the unsaid but it takes us away from the parable's meaning and intention. For this parable it seems to come down to 'is the kingdom of heaven worth the risk, effort and expense in obtaining it?' – and the answer is of course 'you bet it is!'

More specifically then, the focus then is not about 'the hidden treasure' itself but on the commitment, effort and determination required to obtain it.

That makes a lot more sense, particularly in light of the seemingly linked second parable quoted:

***<sup>45</sup> "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. <sup>46</sup> When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it."***

One sees the need for commitment and dedication in this purchase, but I can also hear words like 'capital venture', 'profit and loss margins', 'up-trading'. Is this parable justifying capitalism as one of the less visible basis of our faith?

Again it's possibly a case of not reading too deeply into the parable text and grasping hold of the essential point.

I like to think of the journey towards the achievement of the goal being the focus rather than its successful completion.

But when you think about the 'hidden treasure' and the 'pearl of great value' being acquired and in ownership, one perhaps wants to ask the question, 'so what happens next?'

There will always be another field and a bigger treasure, a more perfect pearl in real life. Was the intense effort, time spent and risk all worth obtaining those things?

Think back through your own experiences. Did your new watch/car/camera match up to the anticipated expectation when you received it, or lead to eventual disappointment or to a sense of partial fulfilment?

On reflection, perhaps the lesson is if we are prepared to go to all these lengths for earthly things, how much more effort should we, can we, ought we, make for the things of God?

The opening words of both parables, 'the kingdom of heaven is like.....', are there to help focus our minds and keep us on the straight and narrow.

There is also a big difference in meaning between '.... is like ....' and '.... is ....'.

I usually work on articles over a couple of weeks, picking them up and putting them down and sleeping on them, and this morning awoke with a different thought about these two linked parables. Supposing the first parable was about Jesus himself .....

Supposing also the purchase of the field represented Jesus paying the ultimate price – ‘he (God the Father) sold (gave) all he had’ in order that the ‘hidden treasure’ can be released from the earth and revealed in the resurrection.

Supposing too that the purchase of the field represented the transition from the Old Testament to the New. ‘Under new ownership’ take on a different meaning. Now what was deliberately hidden or was forgotten is now revealed. Suddenly the parable takes on a ‘prophetic’ nature.

But if this is so then where does it leave the second linked parable regarding ‘the pearl of great value’? The two parables do sit well together.

So what if this related parable is actually a reference to John the Baptist (represented as the merchant who sold everything he had), and the pearl of great value referring to Christ himself?

Whilst this line of enquiry may be of interest, these ideas remain just idle thoughts, but there is nothing to say that parables can’t have different meanings and layers, and that they can have more than one application. Maybe parables are deliberately designed to be so.

In this particular case though, I feel the interpretation remains unchanged – it’s all about risk, effort and expense (personal cost) required to obtain that something of great value, and of course it goes without saying, the greater the value, the greater the likely cost.

And if we will go to all these lengths for something we want, how much more effort will we make for something we need.

This leads to question whether we really understand the difference between 'need' and 'want'.

You can want something without needing it (e.g. a better car), and need something without wanting it (e.g. painful surgery), and both want and need something at the same time (e.g. food when you are starving).

The two parables seem to be based in principle on 'want' rather than 'need' but that maybe because we all understand and identify with what it is to want something much more easily, a case of using the temporal experience to help explain the eternal and the creation of a sense of urgency or expediency.

It keeps coming back to those words, 'the kingdom of heaven is like.....'

Parables are clues that lead us towards greater truths but they may not be absolute or complete truths in themselves. They are largely fictional events based on real life observations intended to illustrate spiritual principles. It is the truth they contain or reveal that is important.

In that sense the parable of the hidden treasure becomes a self-explanation of what a parable is. What it makes clear is that in order to get the best out of it, you have to put the work in.

Last month I wrote on sin and evil, and both these have an impact on the way we read and understand holy writ. I need to touch base on this again.

Sin and evil will cast a shadow on any light a text may contain if given the opportunity. In this respect there is no room for self-interest in seeking spiritual understanding and enlightenment, especially when the foundational and primary principles of our faith are to love God and our neighbours.

Self-interest, unduly putting your own needs and wants above those of others, is a sin. Given free reign, sin grows to become an uncontrollable and unrecognised addiction, and becomes a vehicle for evil to extend its grip over us.

It so quickly grows from being a single moment of inconsequential selfishness to a demanding (and I choose my word carefully) dictatorship if left unattended.

As an aside, one might consider the absolute paranoia that always seems to envelop those with great power. I suspect it is not that accumulation and exaggeration of power, absolute control, status or wealth that matters to them in the end but life itself and the growing realization of being called to account.

Life is finite and death inevitable regardless of our rank or position. Perhaps people know deep down their power and position will be of no use to them when the time comes. They can't bully and threaten their way out of death.



Perhaps we shouldn't be surprised that as these people get closer to death their lives are increasingly filled with fear and insecurity, and the more fearful and insecure they become, the more brutal, controlling and irrational their lifestyle or regime will be.

I wonder what the almost inconsequential moment in time was that led to the transformation of such a person into such a monster, or whether there was some insecurity in their personality that sparked this need to be so controlling, whether the consequences could have been avoided by a small act of kindness or discipline. Even small acts or omissions can have such big consequences and it should remind us that all our actions, big or small, really matter.

I guess we will never really know why people turn out the way they do and we will never really be aware of the part we played. God forbid that somewhere in our lives we helped shape such a person in this way

So back to both parables.....

The difficult reality is that when it comes to 'hidden treasure', we might have to be prepared to do a lot of digging through the detritus of our own and other's lives/behaviours/political, personal, theological and social prejudices and preferences/etc., in order to get to the real truth.

Then there is the element of discerning what 'hidden treasure' is and what separates it from valueless but interesting and distracting junk.

‘Hidden treasure’ is one thing but it has to have purpose, reason, a history or a point to its creation/existence to be of any value. It could be anything, and it’s only ‘treasure’ if someone believes it to be so. However, it has no ‘actual’ value if it remains hidden, or is unrecognised for what it is, or no one knows it even exists. It is only when it is revealed.

Over familiarity with something can produce a blindness to it. We see a lot of this on TV programmes like ‘Antiques Road Show’ and the like, where people have no idea of how valuable or rare an item is.

I am always intrigued with the change of attitude towards an object that comes with discovery that it has far more worth than first believed, or the reverse. That says a lot about the fickleness of human nature.

Maybe the ‘hidden treasure’ parable is also warning not to underappreciate what we have otherwise someone else will take it from us. It’s interesting that we usually read the parable from the point of view of the new buyer rather than the original owner. Certainly the shifting of focus opens up new possible interpretations and understanding when it comes to this parable.

Parables are not always as straight forward as they first appear and one of the issues I have with the parable of the pearl of great value is what do you do with it when you’ve got it. That doesn’t get answered.

There will also always be the possibility of a bigger, better and more valuable pearl waiting to be discovered? What then?

Does these questions imply or suggest that this journey of discovery will probably remain unfulfilled and incomplete and filled with unknown uncertainty?

Or are we back to that problem of reading too much into the text or even wanting it to say something different, perhaps something more comfortable and less demanding?

There is no denying the ease at which we do this, and also the ease at which we twist the parables to suit our own ends rather than seek the truth they are intended to convey.

We should be very aware of this tendency. The parables (and other texts) in Holy Scripture are not there to provide means of post-justifying our own often self-interested actions. This definitely is not the intended way to approach scripture and there will be little profit in doing so.

This is not 'theology' but 'me-ology', the 'I' that is central to 'SIN', and it's everywhere. Everyone is subject to it to a greater or lesser extent. It's hard to avoid and all around us – it's a question more about recognising and then minimising its effect.

On that basis we should approach scripture with a total love and commitment to both God and our neighbour and let that shape our attitudes and behaviours, but none of us, as guarded as we might be, are beyond the influence of sin and brave is the person who says or thinks he is without sin (see John 8 v 7).

Still, God's grace is such that even in a state of sin, there will be something of use that will be of benefit to us if we will it.

What I do know about parables is that the more consideration and time you give them, the more they reveal especially if you approach them with a genuinely open and searching mind.

They are like multi-faceted diamonds that catch the light in a myriad of different ways every time you look at them, and never in quite the same way.

Even though very short, the parables of 'the hidden treasure' and 'the pearl of great value' are no exceptions.

+Ian OSJ (UK)

## **PETITIONING GOD**

**or**

**If more people prayed and prayed often,  
would the world be a different place?**

+David, OSJ (Wales)

A petition is a formal document containing signatures that seek action from those in authority. Petitions have little effect when signed by only a few people; however, governments and ruling bodies are often moved to action when they receive a petition with a majority of signatures.

In a general sense, praying is like signing a petition.

Prayer is our great opportunity to effect change in the Devil's world. We must remember that mankind is created with freewill and God must respect that freewill. He greatly desires to fix many of our dire situations but must wait patiently to be invited into action.

As Christians we are citizens of Heaven; we should constantly be petitioning God to bless our earthly nations and to open doors for evangelism. We need to pray for our leaders, our churches and yes, even our enemies. The more citizens of Heaven petitioning, the more likely God is to make that request a reality.

On examining history, we will find that nations with a strong Christian focus generally prosper. However, when Christians stop praying, God must reluctantly leave them to their own devices and the consequences of bad decisions. This is also true individually; if no one is petitioning for your family or friends, God must step back. We may be the only voice praying for our family members and those in our neighbourhood. This should certainly motivate us to invite God to work "His will" into our personal lives, our families, our neighbourhoods and nations.

Christ is our representative and mediator before God. He takes His and our petitions before the Divine Throne. Yet if few Christians are praying, Christ will have few signatures. What a tragedy to send our Lord Jesus Christ to God's Throne of Grace with a blank petition.

**Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Hebrews 4:16**

## **Prayers for April**

Fr. David Startup, OSJ (UK)

Dear Lord, we gather here again today out of love for you and each other and the need to offer you thanks and worship for all that you have done for us. We thank you that we can meet together in freedom without the torment and worry of persecution.

Lord, we thank you for all that you have made, this earth on which we live, all good things around us, which we enjoy and we thank you *especially* for our families and friends. Thank you for being a forgiving and loving God. We thank you for the sacrifice you made in Jesus taking on our sins and dying on the cross in our place, giving us all the opportunity to make a fresh start.

**Lord in your mercy, *hear our prayer.***

We pray today for your kingdom, that your church here on earth may continue to be bound together in love and unity with you and each other.

We pray for strength and true direction for all those, regardless of their position and status, who are combating evil and wickedness right now and ask you to help influence those particularly who are causing conflict for their own benefit.

We particularly ask for strength and wisdom for our own Leaders and especially Elizabeth our Queen. Help us as a nation to establish, affirm and maintain a unity, a oneness, as part of your body with you as our Head.

We pray for those who have put their trust in Jesus and have paid the price in emotional pain, rejection and a sense of isolation from those who have no belief. May your strength and love sustain them in their faith - and give them joy and peace.

We pray for every Christian regardless of denomination and bring to your attention those in danger of losing sight of Jesus and their faith in Him because of lack of interest, growing peer pressure, or political influence.

We remember those for whom worship has become an empty weekly ritual and ask that you help them regain their spiritual vitality.

At this time of Lent we bring to your attention those of us whose witness, service and obedience is being tested by many and various forms of temptation, just as Jesus was.

We pray for revival and refreshment. We ask Lord, for your forgiveness for the times we have made a mess of things, and ask for your help to live in the way that Jesus taught us.

May the love of Jesus revive His church and may He help us to encourage and re-energise others too - regardless of the cost to our freedom and whatever other people may think.

May our faith and obedience increase daily Lord and we ask in your strength to be kept steadfast and true to you. Lord, as you forgive us and continue to offer us new life, help us to forgive others.

Whilst we prepare and remind ourselves of events leading up to Good Friday we look forward Lord to Easter Day and celebrating the resurrection of Jesus and the beginning of Christianity.

Dear and Loving God, we thank you for Mothers and children and for all the joy of family life. Be with those who are grieving because they have no Mother; Be close to those who are struggling because they have no children; be near those who are sad because they are far apart from those they love. let your love be present in every home and help you church Lord to have eyes to see and ears to hear the needs of all who come here.

We ask this in the name of Jesus.

**Lord in your Mercy, *hear our prayer.***

Let us pray in the quietness of our own hearts, for those we know who are in any special need and whose lives are filled with sadness, pain or despair.

We pray for those facing uncertain times and rejection and loss, whatever loss that might be.

Let us bring to the Lord's notice those known to us that are ill, remembering especially at this time.....

Lord, we ask that you heal them in your own way and in your own time. We also ask for your strength and comfort for their loved ones and those who care for them.



We remember those we have loved and who have died - and give thanks for them. Especially at this time we commend to You .....

We ask Lord, that you give strength and comfort to those who have been bereaved.

Lord again, we ask that you continue to heal, to bless and renew *all things*.

We commit ourselves to look to and follow you wherever we are on our life's journey and to be open to your life transforming power and direction with each step we take.

**Merciful Father** - *accept these prayers for the sake of your Son our Saviour, Jesus Christ.*

**Amen.**



## **ARTICLES FOR MEDITATION**

### **WHEN SOMEONE YOU LOVED IS DEAD.**

+David, OSJ (Wales)

Celebrations such as Christmas, Easter and Bank holidays are not all about warm, happy feelings. For many it is about that empty chair around the table. So many are unable to speak about their loss, thus making their hurt and pain more visible externally but horrendous internally within their souls.

Over many years of hands on, dealing personally with incidents at scenes of murders, suicides and unnatural deaths as well as those natural deaths, may the following observations be found useful and a support in difficult and dark times.

- \* It helps to talk about your loss and the person you have lost. Sharing helps you to put things together in your mind, and is healing in itself.
- \* Don't be afraid of pain, and don't anaesthetize it or avoid it - acknowledge it, face it, and you will heal more quickly.
- \* Remember it is natural and it is normal to cry, even for men, it is the bodies form of externally ventilating overpowering feelings and emotions, and a healing part of the grief process. Don't be afraid of this, even in public.
- \* It may come as a surprise to you, to discover which people draw near to you in your grief, and who steps away. Appreciate those who come closer, without judging those who hold back.
- \* Not everything people say to you about grief and your response will be helpful. Decide for yourself what is important for you, and let the rest go.

\* That grief may expose some of your inner fault lines, but don't be afraid of this - learning more about yourself is a gift that comes with grieving.

\* No one grieves perfectly, no matter what you believe. Following the death of a loved one, you will make mistakes we all do, you will make bad choices, even errors of judgment. This is normal, so forgive yourself. Do not cut yourself up, it only makes matters worse!

\* That hope you have inside you, will rise again within you. The human spirit, in combination with God's grace, has its own remarkable resilience.

\* Don't be afraid to live again. God has a good purpose for you, and a plan for your life.

\* Remember, that your faith is an asset, not a liability. When you are tempted to be angry with God, remember that He is an ever present help in time of need. Lean on Him.

**A PRAYER FOR NEW THINGS AROUND THE CORNER.** +David, OSJ (Wales)

“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up, do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.” Isaiah 43:19.

No, No, Lord, I did not see a new thing coming my way. Nor was I always believing that there would be something redeeming in the days ahead. But You can lead Your people through the desert. You can drop manna from heaven. And you can make streams in the wasteland that was my life.

How fitting that as my faith in You is restored, so is the clarity of the path before me. All the signs point to a new and wonderful way. The strength that had gone from my muscles and my mind is now back. Redemption and wholeness are just up ahead. Thank you dear Lord. Amen

### **WISE MAN WRITING A BOOK**

+David, OSJ (Wales)

A wise man was known to be writing a book, but the years went by and he was still a long way from reaching the last page. One day, when he was very old, a young man asked him if he was not impatient to see it completed.

The old man smiled. “All my life it has been my ambition to finish writing my book, but an ambition realized is like a snowflake in a warm hand. Take away my dream and what would I have left?”

When he died, his pen was still in his hand, the unfinished manuscript in front of him. It is said he was smiling happily.

If the story has a moral, it is this: don't take away people's hopes and dreams. Often they are the most precious and best loved things in their lives.

### **PROMISE TO A NATION**

+David, OSJ (Wales)

‘Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord. Psalm 33:12

The man who said, ‘The nation that loses faith in God and man loses not only its most priceless jewel, but its most unifying and conserving force,’ stated a solemn fact that is attested by history and present day happenings.

In our own nation we have witnessed for several decades a drift away from God, resulting in a gradual lowering of moral standards we at one time cherished. The inevitable has happened; a permissive society has been born. The trend is to 'let every man do that which is right in his own eyes.' Almost every day we witness the evidence of such folly in a disregard of authority and violation of law and order.

We have sown the wind, now we are reaping the whirlwind.

It might be argued by some that God's benediction can only rest upon the 'family of God', but the Bible teaches otherwise. God will always acknowledge and reward those who revere His name and respect His laws. 'Them that honour me I will honour' (1 Sam. 2:30) is a principle that has been seen over and over again. Daniel made this clear when he enlightened the heathen king Belshazzar, "O, thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour. (Dan. 5:18).

We are exhorted to pray, "For kings, and for all that are in authority (1 Tim. 2:2). This would hardly be appropriate if they were excluded from receiving blessing from His hand. There is, of course, a vast difference in the kind of blessing from the 'spiritual blessings that are in Christ Jesus' bestowed upon the members of the Church of God.

Some may point out that history furnishes us with evidence that a nation can become distinguished without directly acknowledging the God of the Bible as did Egypt, Persia, Assyria, Rome and others. It is interesting to note, however, that a careful study will reveal that their religions contained principles that are clearly laid down in Holy Writ and that, in the practice of them, great prosperity resulted and remained with them until they departed from these principles.

In Egypt, they had a high moral standard. The spirit of benevolence prevailed.

When an Egyptian died, enquiry was made as to how he spent his life so that due respect should be given to his memory. In Persia, a falsehood was considered in the most horrible taste and a liar was looked upon as the meanest and most disgraceful man.

Rome educated her children so wisely that they were taught virtue as other children were taught letters. She, in her best days, exerted all her energy for the general good.

The motto was 'no citizen of Rome must in any way rob his brother citizen.'

Is there any wonder that these nations became great? When they practiced these principles of righteousness they prospered. When they departed from them there followed the inevitable degeneration and lost glory.

We need to bring God back into the Church, the home and the heart. There should first of all be a humbling and confessing of our sins. Time is running out. Here is a promise to a nation. Who will heed it?

Many years ago General Montgomery appeared on television. He was reviewing the last World War. He gave his version of it and what should be done in the future. He emphasized the enormous problems facing the world..... and that was then..... and look where we are today! Then he said, "I want to finish this programme with a quotation from the Bible. Here it is in Deuteronomy 30: 19, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life!" This is a message for our present time and one to which we all should give due attention.

## **A CLOSED HAND CANNOT RECEIVE.**

Isn't it strange when we least expect it, we see something that grabs our intention, you too may observe something which stirs our imagination. My imagination was stimulated recently by the following line from a church publication:- "A closed hand cannot receive."

How true! Have you ever thought of the many things you cannot do if your hand is closed?

Well I will give a few examples. . .

You can't shake hands. You can't wave a friendly greeting (only shake a fist), you can't pat a child on the head or place a reassuring hand on the shoulder of someone who is discouraged.

You can't stroke a beloved pet.

You can't turn the pages of a book or play a musical instrument.

You can't plant seeds or pick a flower.

Let us be thankful for the joys that come to us through our own open hands and those of others.

+David, OSJ (Wales)

### **Emergency Measures, OSJ (UK):**

It has been decided that given the protracted situation regarding Covid we find ourselves in currently that two new temporary measures have been implemented for all members of OSJ (UK), whether in the Ministry Team or the Ministry Support Team.

Any member of OSJ (UK) may self-administer communion using the form suggested, and that includes to their families and all who are in need if the cannot receive communion from a priest or Eucharistic Minister because they are unavailable or because they are self-isolating.

The same applies to the giving of last rites (viaticum).

Suggested forms of approved service are available (with instructions) to download from our website downloads page:

1. Self-administered Communion

2. Last Rites (Emergency Measures)

Regular services at St Leonard's remain temporarily suspended until repair and redecoration is completed.

+Ian, Executive Bishop, OSJ (UK)





**St Leonard's Chapel,  
Hazlewood Castle,  
Yorkshire,  
LS24 9NJ**



**OSJ (UK) Services, 2022.**

Unless otherwise stated:

Services usually take place on the FIRST and THIRD Sundays of each month at 6.00 p.m.

Services take the form of a short and very gentle communion service, lasting 20-30 minutes.

Regular services will restart when repainting and repairs have been completed but the chapel remains open for private prayer.

2nd January, 2022	16th January, 2022
6th February, 2022	20th February, 2022
6th March, 2022	20th March, 2022
3rd April, 2022	17th April, 2022
1st May, 2022	15th May, 2022
5th June, 2022	19th June, 2022
3rd July, 2022	17th July, 2022
7th August, 2022	21st August, 2022
4th September, 2022	18th September, 2022
2nd October, 2022	16th October, 2022
6th November, 2022	20th November, 2022
4th December, 2022	18th December, 2022

We use a non-alcoholic communion wine so children may take part. There is no requirement to be baptised or confirmed, only to treat with due respect. All are very welcome and all may receive regardless of tradition or denominational background.

**Additional Services:**

Remembrance Sunday:	7th November 10.35 a.m.	TBC
Midnight Mass:	24th December 11.20 p.m.	TBC